



Plenary Speaker - Breakfast

Friday, April 24, 2015

Aricia Martinez

Graduate Student at California State University Stanislaus

“Sharing Youth Voices”

The future of environmental conservation and preservation lies not in our leaders of today, but truly, in those leaders that will come after us – the youth of today. Unfortunately, for many young people, their only exposure to the outdoors comes through television and computer screens, or on the pages of books and magazines, or perhaps through the window of a car. The result is that many youth begin to perceive natural areas as some far-off, irrelevant, or maybe even dangerous places. So clearly, if we want future generations to continue to protect the places we love when they are gone, we must reunite them both physically and emotionally with the natural world. The question remains: How? How do we make the outdoors relevant again? To best answer this question we need to better understand the factors that are driving youth away from outdoors in the first place – and not from the perspective of the professionals already in business, but from the perspective of the young people themselves. In doing so, we can help create a new culture where young people are not just a part of the environmental movement, but the very heart and soul of it.

About Aricia Martinez:

Aricia grew up in Martinez where she spent the majority of her outdoor time helping in the garden, or playing on tennis and basketball courts, or in swimming pools. Even though she wasn't the “outdoorsy” type, she was fascinated by the natural world and felt drawn to places where nature dominated the landscape. For this reason, she decided to study Ecology and Evolution at the University of California, Merced. Through UC Merced, and a wonderful program called the Yosemite Leadership Program, she was accepted into a summer internship with the wilderness division of Yosemite National Park. Through this experience, she realized her desire to teach people about nature, and her love for the Sierra Nevada inspired her to become a steward of the land. Now, Aricia works for the National Park Service, as a Wilderness Permits Ranger in Yosemite during the summer and as a Wilderness Education Ranger at the UC Merced Wilderness Education Center during the academic school year. In August of 2014, she began a Master's Program in Ecology and Sustainability at California State University Stanislaus. In her future, she hopes to apply her education and background as an environmental educator and advocate for the natural world.

